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SERMON

Preach'd in

Swallow-street, St. James's,

ON

WEDNESDAY, *Jan. 16. 1714.*

Being the

National FAST-DAY.

By JAMES ANDERSON, M.A.

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L O N D O N,

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A
S E R M O N

Preached on the
National Fast-Day.

J E R. VIII. 15.

*We looked for Peace, but no Good came:
for a Time of Health, and behold
Trouble.*

THIS Prophet was sent to foretel the Captivity of the *Jews*, to carry a melancholy Message to an obstinate People, that would not credit the Word of the Lord, and cruelly treated this mourning Prophet for only discharging his Work and Errand faithfully. As in other Places, so in this Chapter he shews the approaching general Calamity of that Nation, and accounts for some of the procuring Causes thereof, *viz.* their Idolatry or serving strange Gods, the Sun and Moon, and all the Host of Heaven; their departing from the true Religion by a perpetual Backsliding, their holding Deceit and

refusing to return ; the not speaking aright, and no Man repenting him of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turning to his Course, as the Horse rusheth into the Battel ; their being more stupid and inconsiderate than the Stork, the Turtle, the Crane and the Swallow, that know and observe the Time of their Coming, but the *Jews* knew not the Judgment of the Lord ; their saying, We are Wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us ; every one from the least to the greatest being given to Covetousness ; from the Prophet even unto the Priest every one dealing falsely. And in Ver. 11. the Lord particularly blames the Prophets and Priests, *For they have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my People slightly, saying, PEACE, PEACE, when there is no PEACE* : And because they were not at all asham'd of their Abominations, their Fall and Ruin is threaten'd with that of the whole Land, Ver. 12, 13.

But, Ver. 14. the Prophet brings in the Body of the People speaking as in the Day of their Straits, *Why do we sit still? Assemble your selves, and let us enter into the defenced Cities, and let us be silent there : for the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us Water of Gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord*. And in the Text he supposes that Nation viewing the Approach of the *Babylonish Army*, the snorting of their Horses being heard from Dan, Ver. 16. and so brings them in saying what they too surely said at last, when their City and Temple were destroy'd, and they became Slaves to their Uncircumcised and their inveterate Enemies, *We looked for Peace, but no Good came ; for a Time of Health, and behold Trouble!* As if they had said, “ We see now too late that good *Jeremiah* spoke the Word of the Lord, and that the others were false Prophets, and healed our Hurt slightly, saying, PEACE, PEACE, when there is no PEACE ; by their fair Persuasions we have long expected the Peace and Safety of our Nation ; we looked with earnest
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“ Longing for a Time of retrieving the Nation’s
“ Health, and of curing our political Distempers and
“ Disorders. But alas! we find our selves deluded at
“ last; for tho’ we looked for Peace, yet no Good
“ came; and for a Time of Health, yet behold
“ Trouble! All our former Hopes are frustrated:
“ *for the snorting of the Chaldean Horses was heard from*
“ *Dan, the whole Land trembled at the Sound of the neigh-*
“ *ing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devou-*
“ *red the Land, and all that is in it, the City, and those*
“ *that dwell therein, Ver. 16.*

And thus from the Text and Context we may
Observe, That God may and will frustrate a Na-
tion’s Hopes of Peace and Health, when their
Sins are multiply’d, and not repented of.

In handling which, with God’s help, I shall en-
deavour

I. To Confirm it: And,

II. To Improve it for the Occasion of the Day.

I. I shall endeavour to Confirm it.

This is the obvious Truth of the Text, and will fur-
ther appear by a due Consideration of the Nature of
God, and a Review of the Method of his Providence
with obstinate Nations.

I. By a due Consideration of the Nature of God.
There are too many, that either think God is an idle
Spectator of the Affairs of the World, and will allow
him no further Superintendency over it than a Clock-
maker or an Architect; or that suppose him to be only
Goodness and Mercy, without ever considering his
Holiness and Justice. But both miserably mistake our
God, who has declared in his Word, that his Eyes are
in every Place beholding the Evil and the Good, in

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order

order to rule and over-rule all things, and prepare for the Solemnity of a General Judgment : And nothing is more plainly revealed in Scripture than God's VINDICTIVE JUSTICE ; for he has told us himself, *Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay it.* Nay, when he proclaims himself to *Moses* to be *Merciful and Gracious, Long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth* ; he adds, *and that will by no means clear the Guilty, visiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children,* Exod. 34. 6, 7.

And as this Truth has been also discovered by those that never had the Help of Divine Revelation, so 'tis obvious to any unbiass'd Person that considers the Nature of the Infinite Being absolutely Perfect, who has all real Perfection in his Essence, and must then be Holy as well as Good, and Just as well as Merciful. Hence it follows that our Just and Jealous God may and will justly frustrate an unrepenting Nation's Hopes of *Peace and Health* in his own due Time, and vindicate his Honour in their inevitable Ruin.

It must be so.

But, 2. I shall prove that it has been so, by taking a short Review of the Method of his Providence, with the Nations whose Sins have been multiply'd, and not repented of. The Scripture gives us the History of Divine Providence for about Four Thousand Years, and shews us,

How God destroy'd the old World by a Deluge, even when they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in Marriage ; and so were looking for Peace, but no Good came : because God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great in the Earth.

The Nations of the Valley of *Sodom* were looking for Peace the same Day that God rained Fire from Heaven to destroy them and their Hopes, because their Sin was very grievous, and the Cry thereof came before God.

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So the *Egyptians*, with their GRAND MONARCH, felt the Weight of God's vindictive Hand by many Plagues, and a final Overthrow, even when they thought themselves secure, and expected a compleat Victory over God's *Israel*.

And the Kings and Nations of *Canaan*, when the Cup of their Iniquity was full, tasted God's Cup of Trembling and Wrath in the height of their Glory and Hope. And so the other Nations, whose Destruction we read of in Sacred Story, did all look for Peace, but no Good came: For as such Nations forsook the Lord, he forsook them, and gave them up to their own Delusions.

Thus the *Ten Tribes*, after they despised all Reproof, and slighted God's Messengers, and thought themselves in a very safe State, and had a good Prospect of future Peace, were carry'd away Captive, and never heard of since.

So the Tribes of *Judah* and *Benjamin* here in the Text looked in vain for Peace, and for a Time of Health, until Evil and Trouble seized them from the Lord, because they hearken'd not to the Voice of his Prophets, and repented not of their Wickedness.

I might also instance in the Disappointments and Ruin of the *Chaldean*, the *Grecian*, and *Roman* Empires, of all Nations, of all Churches, of all Political Societies of which we have certain and distinct Accounts; whereby it would appear, that when People have been posting to Ruin, they have been deluded with the vain Hopes of Peace and Health, and that their multiply'd unrepented of Sins have provok'd a Just God to give them a lamentable Balk.

And as this has been the Method of Divine Providence with guilty Nations hitherto, so we have no ground of supposing God will change his Procedure with an obstinate Generation: Nay, we find our Lord *Jesus Christ* foretells the miserable Disappointment of the whole sinful World at his coming to the general

Judgment, Matth. 24. 38, 39. *For as in the Days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in Marriage, until the Day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew not until the Flood came and took them all away; so shall also the Coming of the Son of Man be:*

For our Lord is still the same,
And who can turn him?

II. I shall improve this Truth for the Occasion of the Day.

My Brethren, we of this Nation are this Day called by Authority to assemble our selves before God for Prayer and Fasting, for deprecating the Divine Vengeance, and imploring the Divine Blessing. We are looking for *Peace* after a long and expensive War; and for a Time of *Health*, after we have long groaned under many political Disorders. The Health and Peace of the Nation is what all sorts of Men seem to desire; and none can refuse to wish for such Blessings, that consider the Nation's present Circumstances: So that however different Mens Views thereof may be, and whatever different Measures may be chosen by the several Parties among us for bringing about those desirable Ends; yet still we are all agreed in the Thing it self, we are all looking for Peace and for a Time of Health. Therefore I shall improve this Truth for a serious Enquiry, Whether we may justly look for Peace, and for a Time of Health; or whether God may not justly frustrate our Hopes thereof, because of our multiply'd Provocations not repented of?

'Tis true, God has try'd us with many Blessings; He has gone forth with our Armies, and made our late General, the DUKE of MARLBOROUGH, signally successful, having won all the Battles he fought, and taken all the Cities he besieged: so that we are come
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into the Frontiers of the Common Enemy of *Europe*, and made him and his People glad at the Prospect of Peace.

We are also blest'd with a Good PROTESTANT QUEEN, whom God long preserve; with a happy Constitution, and the Legal Settlement of the *Protestant Succession to the Crown in the Line and House of HANNOVER*; and with many other invaluable Blessings, for which we ought jointly to thank God. But yet if we take a View of our multiply'd Provocations not repented of, we shall find but little solid Ground to look for Peace and a Time of Health, and may rather fear a sad tho' just Disappointment.

For, in the first place, have we not abused our former and present Mercies, and proved most ungrateful to our Gracious God for delivering us so often from the Jaws of *Popery* and *Slavery*? We forget our Almighty Saviour, and too many reproach Those, whom God has rais'd up as the Instruments of our former Health and Peace: for how is the Glorious Memory of the Late KING WILLIAM traduc'd by those unthankful Murmurers, that long to Return again to the *House of Bondage*, and the *Flesh-pots of Egypt*, and only want a Captain to lead them thither? How few, how very few, among us have behaved our selves as became a People saved by the Lord?

For does not Vice and Immorality abound up and down the Land as much as ever? The many avow'd Debaucheries of some former Reigns are not yet cur'd. And though our Virtuous QUEEN has declar'd from the Throne against Immorality, and enjoin'd her Ministers to execute the Laws against it; yet alas! Iniquity of all sorts prevails, and is openly practis'd by Men of all Ranks, by those that are High and Low, Rich and Poor, Noble and Base, Young and Old, Male and Female, Priests and People, Professors and Profligates. This can be well vouch'd by the *Societies for Reformation of Manners*, and is too notorious to be hid from

from any common Observer. Who can walk the Streets of LONDON and WESTMINSTER, or of most Towns, without hearing Oaths and Curses, some old and some new coin'd, Blasphemies, Railings, Backbitings, evil Surmisings, and obscene Talk? And every one may observe an avow'd Practice of Drunkenness, Adulteries, Whoredoms, and other such Abominations, that are the Reproach of human Nature, as well as of our common Christianity. Besides all this, the Covetousness and Defrauding of many, the Bribery, the Lying and Falsehood, the Oppression of the Poor and Needy, the Fatherless, Widow, and Stranger, and the numberless Sins done in secret, that ought not to be once nam'd amongst us, are more than enough to draw down inexorable Vengeance upon us, except we repent. So that instead of looking for Peace and Health, we may too justly fear God may say of us as of the Jews, Jer. 9. 9. *Shall I not visit them for these things, saith the Lord? shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?*

But farther, let us without Prejudice consider the visible Neglect of *Church-Discipline* among all sorts of Protestants. Those that should oversee God's Vineyard, are too apt to frame Excuses for the Neglect of this Important Duty: Some are afraid of provoking their Enemies, and others of angring Great Men, and the Heads of Parishes and Congregations. Some complain of the Want of due Authority, when yet They use not their present undisputed Authority as They ought: Some cry down all *Discipline* as *Priestcraft*, and others are afraid of their own Shadow. But tho' there was no Precept in God's Word for *Discipline*, (as nothing is more expressly enjoin'd) yet the great Usefulness of it, when wisely administred, and the dismal Effects of its Neglect, are enough to enforce the due Practice of it on all that love the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ: and 'tis apparent that the Neglect of *Discipline* is one
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of the original Causes of the Decay of Christian Love, and the careless Lives both of Ministers and People, and of many other sad things.

And what shall we say of the late Contagion of *Scepticism* and *Deism*, that has influenc'd many to despise a Gospel-Ministry and Ordinances, and laugh at Divine Revelation as neither True in Fact, nor Necessary to a benighted World? How openly do the Old and Young Scepticks of our Day burlesque the Holy Scripture, and cry down its Authority? Besides, the gross Novelties of Enthusiasm, and the Heresies of the *Arrians*, the *Pelagians*, and *Sacnians* of late are asserted to be the Truths of God by many, of whom better Things might have been expected.

But have not even some that are called good Protestants made too great Advances toward Rome, by writing and preaching up the *Popish Doctrines* of AURICULAR CONFESSION, the AUTHORITATIVE ABSOLUTION OF PRIESTS, the accounting the consecrated Elements of Bread and Wine in the Lord's Supper a Real Sacrifice, the Denying the Pope to be the Great Antichrist, and Declaring against the Administrations of any Protestant Minister as void and null, who is not supposed to belong to their pretended, though frivolous, personal Succession, however much he agrees with Primitive Doctrine, Purity and Order; and some other such like Popish Errors, that all the Reformed Churches have jointly and solemnly renounced, (as appears by their Articles, with their other Ecclesiastical Documents) which neither we nor our Fathers were ever able to bear.

Likewise what a strange Evil Spirit is gone out of late? Has not the Devil sown the Tares of Malice and Strife through the Land, and has he not succeeded in his Attempts? For how many Old Friendships are broken? How many Families torn to pieces by the Trick of Crafty Men, and the Folly of an unthinking Multitude? Are not most Men now jealous of one another, even those

those of the same Denomination, to the great Hindrance of the Safety and Freedom of Society? Every Man is ready to look on his Neighbour as on a *Spy*, especially if he express not himself at the same Rate in all Political Affairs; and our Language is like to be confounded as that of the Builders of *Babel*.

Nay, we may see such an amazing *Jumble* of Men lately accounted *Antipodes* to one another; like the uniting of the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* of old against Christ and the Gospel; the one sort regarding the unwritten Traditions of their Fathers, more than the weighty Points of the Law; and the others believing no Resurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit: so that few can give a plausible Guess of either our present State or future Prospect.

To which may be added, the horrible Ingratitude of some *Great Men* to Those that strictly adhered to Them. Have we not seen an honest People's Cause and Interest suddenly given up by their late pretended Friends and Defenders, only for the Sake of an *uncouth Conjunction*, and for obtaining some politick Designs, that may perhaps prove abortive. *The doing Evil that Good may come of it*, is no Christian Doctrine, but hatch'd in Hell, and sent forth from the Schools of the *Jesuits*. But to make an *harmless People* a common Prey and Scorn to their Enemies, without just Ground of Offence, is surely as Evil a Thing now as ever it was before, when solemn Protestations and Declarations were made against it, and the Stroke seasonably prevented by those that have at last laid it on, or would not endeavour to ward it off. If it be said, that the Stroke was inevitable, yet surely it ill became *Friends* and *Defenders* to concert it, after so long and faithful an Adherence; as it does not become their *Votaries* to insult and traduce them after the Injury is done. I pray God They may all repent, and enable them to make a proper Atonement, if possible; and that those
honest

honest Sufferers may learn to depend on the Living and Unchangeable God, and not on any Man or Party of Men for the future.

Now besides all These, we have *the old Grievance of England, the GROWTH OF POPERY*, still clamant; though it never prevail'd so quietly as of late. Those that cross Sea and Land to make one Profelyte, were wont to brag of their Success; but now the *Trafficking Priests and Jesuits* may be found sculking up and down in all Shapes and Disguises. But that They have mightily succeeded, appears by the vast Swarms of *English Papists* at the Chapels of Foreign Ministers of State, and the many *private Altars* They have erected in and about *London*, besides their Conquests in the Country, and the other Cities of the Nation. These are by Principle for a foreign Civil Head, *the St. Germain's Pretender*; and a foreign Ecclesiastical Head, *the Pope*; and if number'd with the other Enemies of the *Protestant Succession in the House of HANOVER*, will be found a vast and dreadful Legion.

These Things, without naming more, are so abominable in the Sight of God; and we not having duly repented of them, are so obnoxious to the Displeasure of Heaven, that I may warrantably conclude we have no better Reason to hope for the *Peace and Health* of our Nation, than the *Jews* had of old, their Sins and ours being parallel.

God may justly frustrate all our Hopes, and turn us again into the Wilderness, to encounter many and various Conflicts, as he did to the *Israelites*, when on the Borders of *Canaan*, and ready to go in and possess it. We may look long for Peace, but no Good may come; for a Time of Health, and behold Trouble. Or if it please God to send us *Peace abroad*, he may justly bring the Sword upon us at home; and as he has handed about a *Cup of Trembling* round the other Nations of *Europe*, he may justly cause us to drink up the Dregs thereof.

thereof. Or he may leave us to conclude *an hasty and unsettled Peace*, that may be productive of political Illness at home, and a more wasting War abroad. In short, should he enter into Judgment with us, we must own the Justice of his Procedure, whatever it be, for we have grievously sinned against him.

Therefore I shall conclude this Discourse, directing you to the most proper Ways and Means of appeasing God's Anger, and exciting you to the Practice thereof; that so we may warrantably hope for the Peace and Health of our distemper'd Country.

1. Let us make an Essay of a *personal Reformation*. I am not preaching before *Queen and Parliament*, or the *Great ones of the Earth* (tho' this is a seasonable Advice to such) but before you that have not the Opportunity and Authority of making a *publick Reformation*, therefore let us enquire into the Evil and Folly of our own Hearts and Lives; and upon the Discovery, let us return to God by an unfeign'd Repentance and Amendment, and by renew'd Acts of Faith on our Lord Jesus Christ. If every one did this, a *National Reformation* would necessarily ensue.

2. Let us bewail the Sin and Guilt of the Land before God, and stand in the Gap, and make up the Breach, all we can. This is the Duty, and has been the laudable Practice of God's People in all Ages; by which they have stop't the Current of National Judgments, and averted an imminent Blow; or at least, they have been thereby protected from falling in a general Calamity and Overthrow: Thus Ezek. 9.4. *And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the City, thro' the midst of Jerusalem, and set a Mark upon the Foreheads of the Men that sigh, and that cry for all the Abominations that be done in the midst thereof, viz. that when others were cut off they might be spared.*

3. Let us draw near the Throne of Grace, and pray to God with all Earnestness, and without ceasing in the Name of our blessed Mediator, *the Prince of Peace,*
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and Captain of Salvation, that God would grant the Spirit of Grace, and Supplication to all Ranks and Degrees of Persons, and reform our *Nobility and Gentry*, that they may Influence others by their Authority and good Example; that he may pardon our multiplied Provocations, and purge us from all Iniquity and Error; that he may rebuke the Spirit of Malice and Strife, gone out amongst us, and make all good Christians love one another, as the Members of the same mystical Body of Christ, however they may freely differ in other things; that he may bless a despised Gospel with glorious Success on Men's Hearts, and open their Eyes to see their true Interest, and assist them in pursuing it; and make all Sorts amongst us more like our Lord Jesus, in all his imitable Perfections; that he would rule in the Heart of our QUEEN, and make her Reign long and prosperous, and teach our *Senators Wisdom*, and direct them in all their Consultations and Acts of Government, and to hate the establishing of Iniquity by a Law; that he may settle *Peace and Truth* on sure and lasting Foundations, and grant such a publick Peace, when he pleases, as may be honourable, safe and lasting to us and to all the *Reformed Churches*, that he may disappoint the vain Hopes of our common Adversaries, by continuing the Protestant reformed Religion amongst us, and securing further the Protestant Succession to the Crown in the Line and House of HANOVER; that so we may be a People saved by the Lord, and may never be reduc'd to lay with the *Jews* in the Text, *We looken for Peace, but no good came: and for a Time of Health, and behold Trouble.*

The Lord bless what has been spoken; and to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one eternal God, be ascribed the Kingdom, Power and Praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

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